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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//JF/UNMA//  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J3//  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
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RUMICEA/JICCENT MACDILL AFB FL  
RHMFIUU/COMSOCCENT MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2341  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2546  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 5716  
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 001284

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR SA/FO, SA/A, S/CT, SA/PAB, EUR/RPM, INL  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG  
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND  
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD

E.O. 12958 N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#) [UK](#)  
SUBJECT: PRT/LASHKAR GAH - UK OFFICIALS DISCUSS  
TRANSITION WITH PROVINCIAL COUNCIL AND MULLAHS'  
COUNCIL

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: UK officials told Provincial Council (PC) and Mullahs' Council members in separate meetings on March 19 that the UK mission will last at least three years. The mission is in conjunction with the GOA and will focus on several areas: (1) Extending the government's authority throughout the country; (2) strengthening security government institutions; (3) implementing programs for social and economic development; and (4) assisting the government in counternarcotics. PC members and mullahs said that security, along with the destabilizing effect of Pakistan, is of paramount concern. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) As part of its transition activities, UK civilian and military officials conducted two shuras (council meetings) in Lashkar Gah on March 19. The first session was with four PC members, including deputy chairman Haji Qurban Ali Urozgani, Al-haj Mohammed Hassan, Haji Din Mohammed, and Salima Sharifi. The second session included 10 mullahs from Lashkar Gah and the nearby districts, led by the head of the Mullahs' council, Mullah Ahmad. The head mullah of Lashkar Gah, Mouwi Qari Mukhter Ahmad Haqani was part of this group. UK participants included Colonel Gordon Messenger, UK Task Force Commander, Lt. Col. Henry Worsley, incoming PRT commander, Nick Kay, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Regional Coordinator, and Susan Crombie, the FCO political officer assigned to the

PRT.

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WHAT WE'RE HERE TO DO  
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13. (SBU) The UK officials provided the same briefing to the PC members and the mullahs. After an introduction (in Pashto) by Lt. Col. Worsley describing how the UK is in the midst of a campaign to explain to district and other councils the UK deployment, Mr. Kay said that, the UK mission is in accordance with UN resolutions and at the request of the GOA. The mission intends to help the GOA extend its authority throughout Helmand; improve security and justice; strengthen government institutions; and advance social and economic development; and assist the government in counternarcotics. The effort will be international, to include Denmark, Estonia, and the United States. He emphasized that all activities will be done in partnership with the GOA. Ms. Crombie added that the UK is in Afghanistan to support the democratically elected government.

14. (SBU) Concerning development assistance, Mr. Kay noted that there will be a representative from the Department for International Development (DFID) at the PRT. However, most of DFID's assistance will be channeled through the GOA. The focus of PRT funding will be in support of, and through sub-national government structures. The goal of the UK approach is, to the extent possible, have citizens see that assistance is coming from their own government.

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SECURITY IS THE KEY  
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15. (SBU) Col. Messenger said that security is the top UK priority. The UK deployment will include about 2,000 troops who will be co-located with an Afghan National Army (ANA) brigade at a new base being constructed about 40 kilometers west of Gereshk, the second largest town in Helmand. The UK and ANA troops will represent a ten-fold increase in available troops. The UK approach will be to work closely with the local population. Troops will patrol in all parts of the province, including the southern border with Pakistan. All UK activities will be performed jointly with ANA and Afghan National Police (ANP) counterparts. Concerning counternarcotics, Col. Messenger said that no UK military personnel will be eradicating poppy; however, part of the UK mission is to support the government in its counternarcotics efforts. He noted that, the UK personnel are "guests" in Afghanistan and will be culturally sensitive during their deployment. He closed by telling the audiences that, "as a partnership, we can make life better for Afghanistan."

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PROVINCIAL COUNCIL REACTS  
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16. (SBU) Deputy Chairman Urozgani said that from what he has heard, people are glad that the UK is paying attention to the security issue. He emphasized the need to secure Helmand's borders, since the border issue relates to both security and narcotics smuggling. He opined that, to a great extent, divisive elements in Pakistan are trying to destabilize Afghanistan. PC member Din Mohammed

said that, in addition to security, UK assistance on the corruption issue will be most welcome. He noted that morale is low among many citizens due to the pervasive corruption. He also urged the UK to pressure Pakistan to cease helping the Taliban. Din Mohammed also suggested that the UK should help improve roads and communications; this will have a positive impact on security.

¶7. (SBU) Concerning the poppy issue, Mohammed Hassan said that many of the farmers facing eradication are "very poor." He urged the UK to provide direct assistance to those farmers, especially providing seeds for corn, cotton, and wheat. He cautioned that if assistance is not provided directly, those who most need it will not receive it, due to corruption.

¶8. (SBU) PC members also discussed the problem of many schools being closed due to Taliban intimidation and burnings. Mr. Urozgani noted that many Afghans are studying in Pakistani religious institutions that encourage those who return to Afghanistan to work against the government - this situation has contributed to the deterioration in the province's education system.

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WHAT THE MULLAHS ARE THINKING  
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¶9. (SBU) The head of the Mullahs' Council, Mullah Ahmad, expressed appreciation that the UK officials brought the two sides together to discuss the upcoming UK deployment. He noted that importance of the mullahs as a bridge between the government and the people. Other mullahs sounded themes similar to the PC members. One lamented the number of Afghan students studying in extremist Pakistani religious institutions, who then bring "bad ideas" back to Afghanistan. From this statement, he segued to the need for building more religious schools in Helmand. Another mullah appealed to the UK officials for additional support. Mullah Haqani, the head mullah at the main Lashkar Gah mosque, said that it is important for the people to support the government in order to improve security. He said that the relationship with the U.S. was positive; he expected that this will also be true with the UK. The mullahs agreed that they should meet monthly with the PRT.

¶10. (SBU) Regarding poppy, Mullah Haqani said that growing poppy per se is not against the Koran. However, if it is used for making illegal narcotics, then it is prohibited. Mullah Haqani also stated that the use of opium and heroin is increasing among Helmand citizens, including women and young people. He noted that, while eradication is important, it should be followed closely by alternative livelihoods assistance. Concerning education, Haqani said that "all children" should be educated. Despite what some "uneducated" people say, there is nothing in the Koran that prohibits education.

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COMMENT  
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¶11. (SBU) Beyond the Pakistan bashing, both the PC and the Mullahs' council appeared pleased that the UK officials reached out to discuss the transition and the UK deployment. The more robust security posture was especially well received. That the UK

officials made clear on how development assistance will be administered was also important. Whether or not the audiences fully grasped that the UK PRT approach to development may be very different to that of the U.S. PRT is still an open question.

NORLAND